

Former DE Resident Ken Burns, Officials Hold Press Conference to Underscore DE Need for National Park; Tour Old New Castle sites

NEW CASTLE, Del. – Today, Sen. Tom Carper, Rep. John Carney (both D-Del.) and Secretary of Delaware Department of Natural Resources Environmental Control (DNREC) Collin O'Mara welcomed renowned filmmaker and former Delaware resident Ken Burns, creator of "America's Best Idea – the National Park System," to their effort to underscore Delaware's need for a national park. At the press conference, held at the old New Castle Court House, the group emphasized that Delaware, the first state to sign the Constitution, the first state in the union, is the last state to have a national park, and that the First State National Historical Park Act of 2011, introduced by the Delaware Delegation in February, would change that.

The First State National Historical Park Act of 2011 would create a park celebrating early American Dutch, Swedish and English Settlements located throughout Delaware, and Delaware's role in the events leading up to the founding of our nation. The park will include sites and attractions in each of Delaware's three counties. The legislation also allows the Park Service to work with other historically significant sites related to the national park's scope to be included in support materials, tours and programs.

"The fact that Delaware does not have a national park is unacceptable," said Sen. Carper. "For years, I have been working with federal officials, state officials, community leaders and activists to find a theme and a park that fits well within Delaware. National parks are an invaluable resource for understanding our nation's historic and cultural heritage, as well as our natural environment. Visitors to Delaware should be able to return to their homes with fond, lasting memories of their national park experience here – memories of how our small state helped to launch the most enduring experiment in democracy that the world has ever known – the United States of America."

“The first state to sign the Constitution should not be the only state without a national park,” said Rep. Carney. “Delaware has a long and distinguished history that helps tell the story of the founding of this great nation. From Fort Christina to Ryves-Holt House to Dover Green, our state's character and prestige is indelibly linked to our historic landmarks. I will continue to work with Senator Carper and Senator Coons, as well as my colleagues in Congress on both sides of the aisle, to fight for a First State National Park.”

“Delaware offers visitors a great variety of activities – history, art, nature, sports, and shopping – in a very convenient location,” said Delaware Secretary of State Jeffrey Bullock, whose department oversees some of the resources that would become part of the National Park. “The delegation has made clear that the First State National Historical Park would better enable us to share important pieces of American history, while strengthening our local economy.”

“Delaware has a proud cultural and environmental heritage that will be greatly enhanced and preserved for current and future generations through the establishment of a national park,” said Sec. O'Mara. “Making this vision a reality will not only preserve and promote the important aspects of our history, but will give Delaware's economy a boost by bringing new visitors to our state. We thank Delaware's congressional delegation – and especially Senator Carper – for their dedication and hard work to bring a national park to Delaware.”

Representatives from the towns and cities included in the proposed park also attended the event.

Following the press conference, the Delaware officials and the filmmaker toured the old New Castle Court House and the old Sheriff's House, two of the sites authorized to be included in Delaware's national park.

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